



Fact Sheet

IWPR #B337

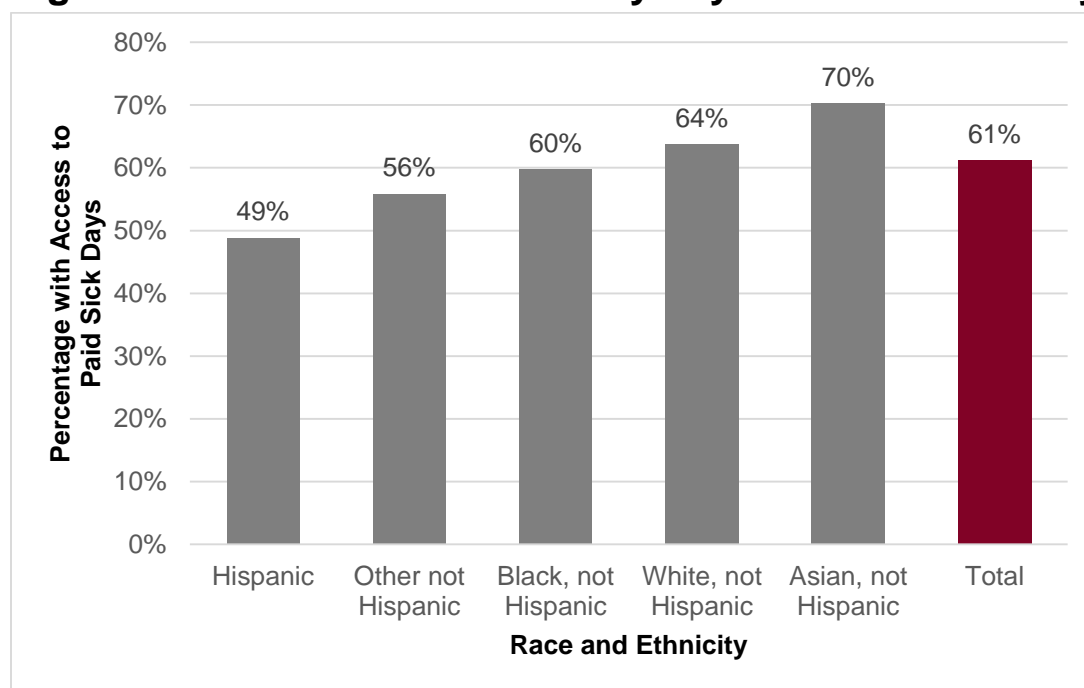
July 2014

Paid Sick Days Access Varies by Race/Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, and Job Characteristics

Paid sick days bring multiple benefits to employers, workers, families, and communities at large.¹ The economic and public health benefits of paid sick leave coverage are substantial, including safer work environments;² reduced spread of contagion;³ and reduced health care costs.⁴ Access to this important benefit, however, is still too rare, and is unequally distributed across the U.S. population, with substantial differences by race and ethnicity, occupation, earnings levels, and work schedules. New data also reveals differences by sexual orientation, especially for men.

Utilizing data from the 2013 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), IWPR finds that 61 percent of workers age 18 years and older in the U.S. had access to paid sick days⁵ (Figure 1); up from 57 percent in 2009.⁶ Nearly 49 million workers lack access. Hispanic workers are much less likely to have paid sick days than white, Asian or black workers. Less than half of Hispanic workers (49 percent) in the United States have access to paid sick days.

Figure 1. Access to Paid Sick Days by Race and Ethnicity



Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) analysis of the 2013 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS).

Note: Access rates are calculated for employed individuals age 18 years and older that responded yes or no to the following question: Do you have paid sick leave on your main job or business? “Other not Hispanic” category includes American Indian or Alaska natives, and individuals reporting multiple racial identities. None of these populations were individually large enough for separate analysis; all were kept in the interest of inclusion.

Access rates for male and female workers are 60 and 62 percent, respectively (Table 1). Among Hispanic workers, women (51 percent) are more likely than men (47 percent) to have access to paid sick days, which may relate to occupational distribution by sex.⁷ Sixty percent of black women are estimated to have access to paid sick days compared with 59 percent of men. However, Asian men (75 percent) are substantially more likely than Asian women (65 percent) to have paid sick days.

Table 1. Access to Paid Sick Days by Sex, Race and Ethnicity

Population Group	Percentage With Access to Paid Sick Days		
	Men	Women	Total
Total	60%	62%	61%
Hispanic	47%	51%	49%
Other not Hispanic	50%	62%	56%
Black, not Hispanic	59%	60%	60%
White, not Hispanic	63%	65%	64%
Asian, not Hispanic	75%	65%	70%

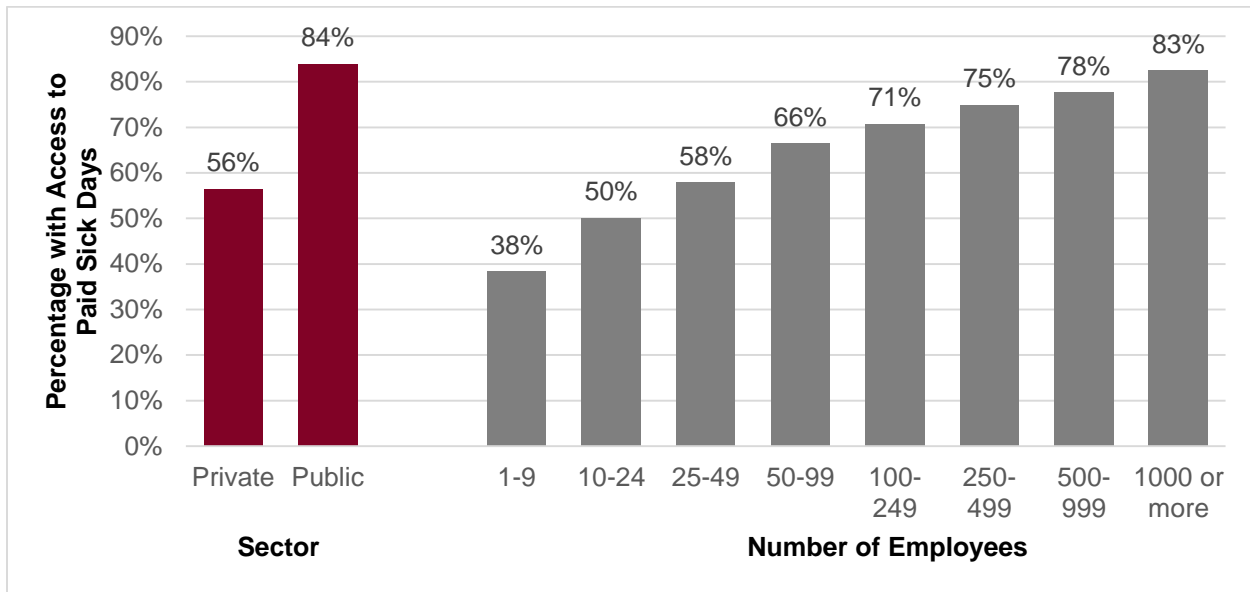
Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) analysis of the 2013 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS).

Note: Access rates are calculated for employed individuals age 18 years and older that responded yes or no to the following question: Do you have paid sick leave on your main job or business? “Other not Hispanic” category includes American Indian or Alaska natives, and individuals reporting multiple racial identities. None of these populations were individually large enough for separate analysis; all were kept in the interest of inclusion.

Differences in coverage between heterosexual and lesbian, gay, or bisexual workers depend on the worker’s sex. Heterosexual men report less access to paid sick days (60 percent) compared to gay or bisexual men (66 percent). Heterosexual women and lesbian or bisexual women, however, report relatively similar access rates (62 and 63 percent, respectively).

Public sector employees have much greater access to paid sick days than private sector employees (Figure 2). Eighty-four percent of public sector employees have access to paid sick days compared to only 56 percent of private sector employees. Access rates also increase as the size of the company increases. Just 38 percent of companies with 1 to 9 employees have access to paid sick days, whereas 83 percent of companies with 1,000 or more employees provide sick days to their workers.

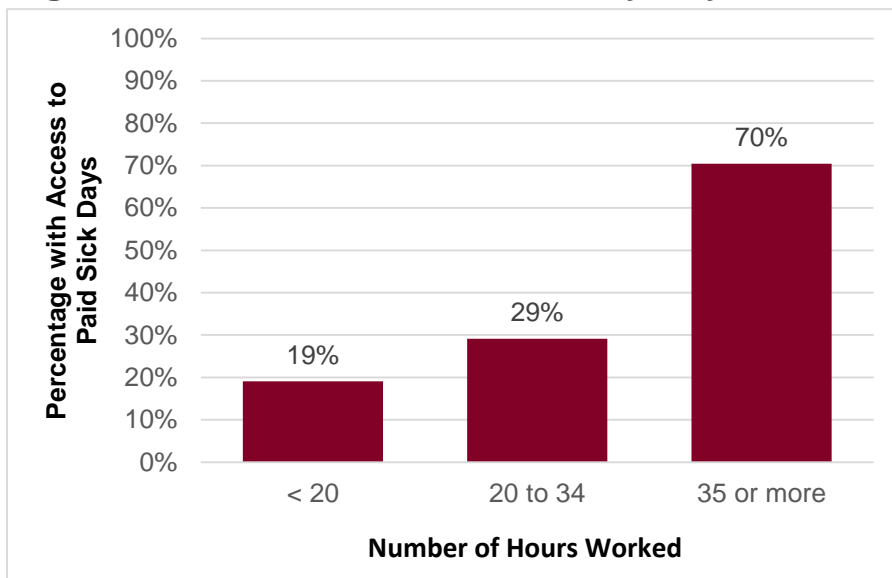
Figure 2. Access to Paid Sick Days by Sector and Company Size



Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) analysis of the 2013 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS).
 Note: Access rates are calculated for employed individuals age 18 years and older that responded yes or no to the following question: Do you have paid sick leave on your main job or business?

Coverage is far superior for full-time as compared to part-time workers: While 5 in 7 full-time workers have paid sick leave (70 percent), only 29 percent of those working between 20 and 34 hours per week have access to sick days with pay, and 19 percent of those working fewer than 20 hours per week (Figure 3).

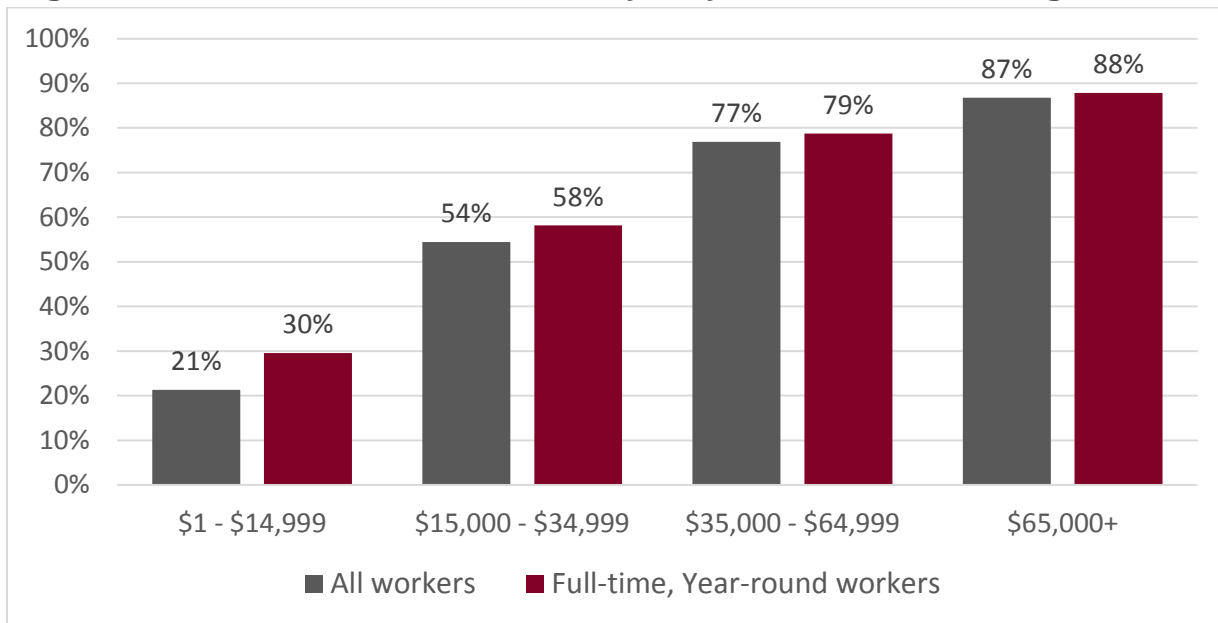
Figure 3. Access to Paid Sick Days by Hours Worked per Week



Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) analysis of the 2013 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS).
 Note: Access rates are calculated for employed individuals age 18 years and older that responded yes or no to the following question: Do you have paid sick leave on your main job or business?

Workers with annual personal earnings at or below \$14,999 are less likely than workers with higher earnings to have paid sick days (Figure 4). Only about 1 in 5 (21 percent) workers in this earnings group is able to take a day off with pay when they are sick, whereas nearly 9 in 10 (87 percent) of those earning \$65,000 or more have access to paid sick days. Full-time, year-round workers at every earnings level have greater than average coverage.

Figure 4. Access to Paid Sick Days by Personal Earnings



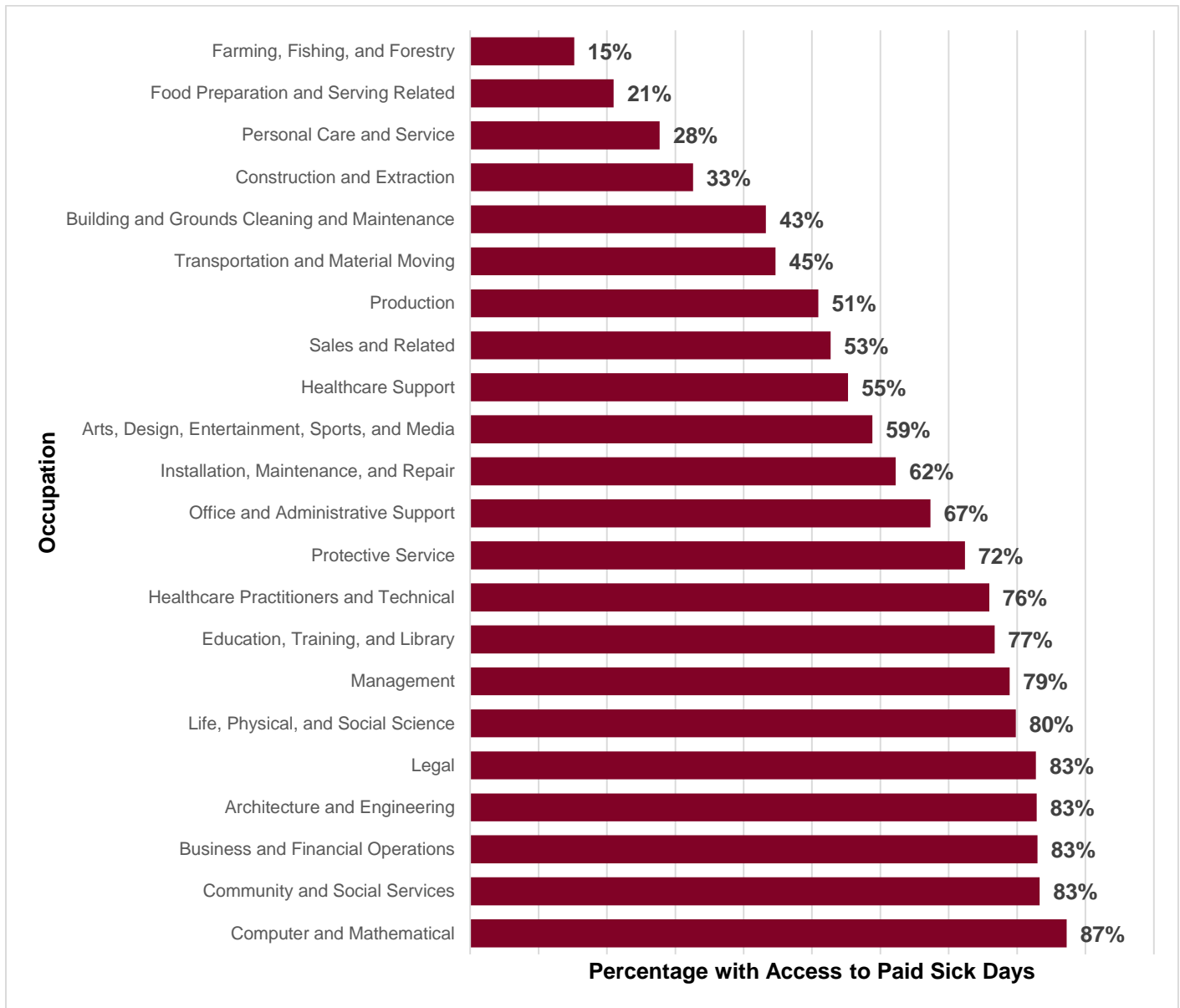
Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) analysis of the 2013 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS).

Note: Access rates are calculated for employed individuals age 18 years and older that responded yes or no to the following question: Do you have paid sick leave on your main job or business?

Access to paid sick days varies widely depending on the type of occupations employees hold. Across the broad spectrum of occupations in the United States, access to paid sick days varies from 87 percent for employees in Computer and Mathematical Occupations to only 15 percent for those employed in Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations (Figure 5).

Paid sick days are especially uncommon in certain jobs requiring frequent contact with the public, which has important public health implications. For example, only about a fifth (21 percent) of employees in Food Preparation and Serving Related occupations, and less than a third (28 percent) of workers in Personal Care and Service occupations have access to sick days with pay. One reason paid sick days access rates are especially low among Hispanic workers is because this group is disproportionately overrepresented in occupations less likely to provide paid sick days.⁸

Figure 5. Access to Paid Sick Days by Occupation



Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) analysis of the 2013 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS).

Note: Access rates are calculated for employed individuals age 18 years and older that responded yes or no to the following question: Do you have paid sick leave on your main job or business?

Ensuring greater access to paid sick days for service workers, Hispanic workers, low-income workers, and part-time workers would bring many public health and economic benefits for employers, children, women, and communities at large.

Notes

¹ Claudia Williams, Susan Andrzejewski, and Jeffrey Hayes. 2013. *Valuing Good Health in Newark: The Costs and Benefits of Earned Sick Time*. IWPR Publication No. B324. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. <<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/valuing-good-health-in-newark-the-costs-and-benefits-of-earned-sick-time> > (accessed February 28, 2014).

² Vicky Lovell. 2003. *No Time to Be Sick: Why Everyone Suffers When Workers Don't have Paid Sick Leave*. IWPR Publication No. B242. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. <<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/no-time-to-be-sick-why-everyone-suffers-when-workers-don2019t-have-paid-sick-leave> > (accessed February 27, 2014).

³ Ron Z Goetzel., Stacey R. Long, Ronald J. Ozminkowski, Kevin Hawkins, Shaohung Wang, and Wendy Lynch. 2004. "Health, Absence, Disability, and Presenteeism Cost Estimates of Certain Physical and Mental Health Conditions Affecting U.S. Employers." *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 46 (April): 398-412.

⁴ Kevin Miller, Claudia Williams, and Youngmin Yi. 2011. *Paid Sick Days and Health: Cost Savings from Reduced Emergency Department Visits*. IWPR Publication No. B301. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. <<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-days-and-health-cost-savings-from-reduced-emergency-department-visits> > (accessed February 28 2014).

⁵ This report provides data from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). The NHIS is a household survey that includes a module administered to 34,557 sampled adults, and can be analyzed by gender, race, and ethnicity, and other characteristics. Another source for estimates of access to earned sick days is the National Compensation Survey (NCS), an employer-based survey that does not include data on the individual characteristics of covered employees. There is a small discrepancy between paid sick days access rates obtained from the NHIS and the NCS. According to the 2013 NCS, 65 percent of private sector workers were able to access this important benefit; while according to the 2013 NHIS, 56 percent of private sector workers have access. Difference between these two surveys is due to collection methods, sample size, and data collection time frame. While the NCS is a payroll survey that does not have age restrictions, the NHIS is a household survey that asks about access to sick leave for adults age 18 years and older. Another reason for the discrepancy between the surveys might be that workers are unaware they have access to sick leave or fear that they cannot fully use it for fear of retaliation by their employers. For more information on paid sick leave access rates from the NCS please consult <<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ebs2.pdf>>.

⁶ Claudia Williams. 2011. *Paid Sick Days Access Rates by Gender and Race and Ethnicity*. IWPR Publication No. Q006. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. <<http://www.iwpr.org/publications/pubs/paid-sick-day-access-rates-by-gender-and-race-ethnicity-2010>>.

⁷ Ariane Hegewisch, Hannah Liepmann, and Jeff Hayes. 2010. *Separate and Not Equal? Gender Segregation in the Labor Market and the Gender Wage Gap*. IWPR Publication No. C377. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.

⁸ Ariane Hegewisch and Stephanie Keller Hudiburg. 2014. *The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation 2013 and by Race and Ethnicity*. IWPR Publication No. C414. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.

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